



Illinois Department of Transportation

Division of Traffic Safety

1340 North 9th Street / P.O. Box 19212 / Springfield, Illinois / 62794-9212

September 12, 2012

Dear Illinois School Bus Operator:

School is once again in session and it is time to focus on school bus safety. It is important that school bus drivers help protect our children by being especially careful while driving near schools. Students should be reminded to avoid the danger zones around a school bus and to be particularly careful when crossing in front of a school bus. Students should be instructed to always make sure that the school bus driver can see them when walking near a school bus. Most importantly, school bus drivers must remember that school bus safety begins with them. They must always be focused and alert. A momentary lapse in concentration could result in tragedy.

The following new law impacts school transportation. Please note the summary below focuses on how this law impacts the Illinois Department of Transportation's (IDOT) programs or regulations and does not address the new law's impact on any regulation or law implemented by the Illinois Secretary of State or the Illinois State Board of Education.

Public Act 97-1025, effective January 1, 2013, requires driver education vehicles over 5 model years of age or having an odometer reading of over 75,000 miles, whichever occurs first, that are used by public high schools to be inspected at an Illinois Official Testing Station at least every 12 months. The vehicle must be equipped with dual control brakes, a mirror on each side of the vehicle (so located as to reflect to the driver a view of the highway for a distance of at least 200 feet to the rear) and a sign visible from the front and the rear identifying the vehicle as a driver education car. The vehicle must pass a safety inspection that includes inspecting the brakes, lights, tires, etc.

Other issues to address:

School Bus Driver's Unobstructed Field of View

The dash area below a school bus windshield must be free of all obstructions. This includes, but is not limited to, two-way radios, GPS systems, pencil holders, decorations, or any other obstacle that may obstruct a school bus driver's field of view. Due to the potential height difference for all drivers, it is difficult to determine what may obstruct one driver's view over another. Therefore, the dash area must be free of all obstructions.

School buses will be rejected at Official Testing Stations or put out of service by IDOT inspectors if any obstructions are located on the dash below the school bus windshield.

Anti-Lock Braking System (ABS) Warning Light

School buses equipped with an anti-lock braking system (ABS) will be rejected at Illinois Official Testing Stations or put out of service by IDOT inspectors if the ABS warning light is illuminated or if the light has been made inoperable. Please be vigilant in maintaining the anti-lock braking system. There will be no exceptions.

School Bus Driver Pretrip Inspection Requirements

The School Bus Driver Pretrip Inspection Requirements have been amended to allow equipment located under the hood of a school bus (e.g., fluids, belts and wiring) to be inspected once every 24 hours when the bus is being used to transport students. The Department is also clarifying that “exempt time” is excluded from the 24 hour period. “Exempt Time” is defined as any time the bus is not being used to transport students (e.g., weekends, holidays, and when school is not in session). Criteria were established to allow school bus owners or operators to vary the procedures for the pretrip inspection requirements. For example, the fluid/wiring checks can be recorded on a supplemental form. The Department must review and approve all variances. The School Bus Driver Pretrip Inspection form was also amended and will be provided to vendors. Existing preprinted forms can be used until they are depleted; no existing inventory of forms must be destroyed or wasted.

Multifunction School Activity Buses (MFSABs)

MFSABs that are owned or operated by, or for, public school districts, private schools, or school transportation contractors are subject to specific lettering and decal requirements. These marking requirements have been in effect since July 1, 2010. Applicable MFSABs that do not meet these requirements will be rejected at Illinois Official Testing Stations.

Applicable MFSABs must **not** display “SCHOOL BUS”; however, they must display:

- 1) The MFSAB’s weight and maximum passenger capacity recommended by the manufacturer on the body to the left of the service door in letters at least two inches high;
- 2) The name of the owner or the entity for which the MFSAB is operated or both shall be painted in a contrasting color on both sides, centered as high as practicable below the window line, in letters at least four inches high; and
- 3) An identification number shall be painted as high as practicable on both the front and rear of the MFSAB in letters at least four inches high.

Decals may be used instead of painting.

MFSABs are also be required to display the decal, “TO COMMENT ON MY DRIVING CALL” or “TO REPORT ERRATIC DRIVING CALL” followed by the area code and phone number of the MFSAB owner. The decal must be white with black lettering and black numerals that measure one inch high. The decal shall be located either on the rear window glazing below the rear seat back, on the MFSAB body below the rear window line, or on the rear bumper. The decal must be visible to the motoring public from the rear of the bus and cannot obstruct any required lettering or numerals. The decal cannot be located on any emergency door glazing or any emergency window glazing. Magnetic signs are prohibited.

MFSABs Manufactured On or After July 1, 2012

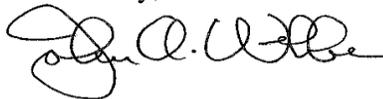
MFSABs that are owned or operated by, or for, public school districts, private schools, or school transportation contractors **and that are manufactured on or after July 1, 2012** are subject to additional safety equipment as follows:

- 1) Child Check System
- 2) Communication Device (two-way radio or authorized cell phone)
- 3) Crossing Control Arm
- 4) First Aid Kit
- 5) Limited Radio Speaker Location
- 6) Noise Suppression Switch
- 7) Rub Rails
- 8) Strobe Lamp
- 9) Vehicle Length (Interior Lettering)

All MFSABs are prohibited from being painted school bus yellow. They are also prohibited from being equipped with a stop signal arm panel or an eight-lamp flashing signal system. All MFSABs (not just those manufactured on or after July 1, 2012) are also required to be equipped with a 10 BC fire extinguisher and emergency warning devices.

If you have any questions, please contact Dan Thompson at the Illinois Department of Transportation’s Division of Traffic Safety at 217/785-3046 or by e-mail at dan.f.thompson@illinois.gov. Please have a safe school bus transportation year!

Sincerely,



John A. Webber
Interim Director